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## CIA loses mail opening cases

Civil libertarians won another victory against the CIA's illegal opening of private mail last week.

New York Federal Court Judge Jack Weinstein awarded an additional \$1000 payment to civil libertarian Corliss Lamont Feb. 17 because the CIA opened two letters he sent to his wife. Lamont will receive a second \$1000 payment in damages for all the other letters the CIA opened and copied. Previously, Weinstein had established a \$1000 damage ceiling to plaintiffs whose mail was illegally opened by the CIA.

In awarding the extra payment to Lamont, Weinstein said: "Illegal government prying into the shared intimacies of husband and wife is despicable."

Lamont, chairman of the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, told the Guardian: "Judge Jack Weinstein's directive that the U.S. government pay me \$2000 in damages and write me an apology for opening my mail is a real victory for civil liberties and an important blow against the invasion of privacy."

"The award, however, is obviously small in view of the fact that 155 letters were involved in the correspondence to and from the Soviet Union from 1955 to 1970."

Judge Weinstein also awarded \$1000 and directed the CIA to send apologies to Victoria Wilson, an editorial employe of book publisher Alfred Knopf, and to Rodney Driver, mathematics professor at the University of Rhode Island, whose mail to the Soviet Union had also been intercepted and copied.

Wilson, Driver and Lamont had demanded that the CIA release their files under the Freedom of Information Act. They entered damage suits when, after examining their files, they learned that the CIA had interfered with their mail.

Judge Weinstein said he limited the awards to \$1000 regardless of the volume of mail because "the number of possible plaintiffs runs into the thousands and possible damages, at the modest level fixed by the court, into the millions."

Judge Weinstein scheduled hearings in March on requests of the plaintiffs in the cases for the return of their letters now in CIA files.

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